

Sūrah Ad-Dahr

(The Time)

This sūrah is Makki, and it has 31 verses, and 2 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 31

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا ﴿١﴾
 إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ مَّدَنَّا لَهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٢﴾
 إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا
 لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلًا وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا ﴿٤﴾ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ
 كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا ﴿٥﴾ عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ
 يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ﴿٦﴾ يُوفُونَ بِالْأَنْذَرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ
 مُسْتَطِيرًا ﴿٧﴾ وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾
 إِنَّمَا نَطْعِمُكُمْ لَوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَنُرِيدَ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَ لَا شُكُورًا ﴿٩﴾
 إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾ فَوَقَّهُمْ اللَّهُ شَرَّ
 ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا ﴿١١﴾ وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً
 وَحَرِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾ مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۚ لَا يَرُونَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا
 وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلُّهَا وَذَلَّلَتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا

﴿١٤﴾ وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِانِيَّةٍ مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّاَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرًا ﴿١٥﴾
 قَوَارِيرًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ
 مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا ﴿١٧﴾ عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَيَطُوفُ
 عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ ۚ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّنثُورًا ﴿١٩﴾
 وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثُمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾ عَلَيْهِمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٍ
 خُضْرٌ وَّاَسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوْاْ أَسَاوِرَ مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ ۚ وَسَقَلَهُمُ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا
 طَهُورًا ﴿٢١﴾ إِنَّ هَٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَّشْكُورًا
 ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿٢٣﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ
 وَلَا تُطِيعْ مِنْهُمْ اِثْمًا اَوْ كُفُورًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاذْكُرْ اِسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا
 ﴿٢٥﴾ وَّمِنَ فَاَسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيْلًا ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ يُحِبُّوْنَ
 الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُوْنَ وَرَآءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيْلًا ﴿٢٧﴾ نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا
 اَسْرَهُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا اَمْثَالَهُمْ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ اِنَّ هَٰذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ
 فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ اِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَا تَشَاءُوْنَ اِلَّا اَنْ يَّشَاءَ اللّٰهُ
 ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٣٠﴾ يَدْخُلُ مَنْ يَّشَاءُ فِى رَحْمَتِهِ ط
 وَالظَّالِمِيْنَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٣١﴾

There has come upon man a period of time in which he was nothing worth mentioning. [1] We have created man from a mixed sperm-drop to put him to a test, so We made him able to hear, able to see. [2] We have shown him the way to (let him) become either grateful or ungrateful. [3] We have prepared for the disbelievers shackles and iron-collars and a blazing Fire. [4] Indeed, the righteous will have a drink from a goblet, blended with (a drink from) Camphor [5] that will be a spring from which Allah's slaves will drink, making it flow (wherever they wish) profusely. [6] They (are the ones who) fulfil the vows, and fear a day whose evil (events) will be widespread, [7] and they give food, despite their

love for it, to the needy, and the orphan, and the captive, [8] (saying to them,) "We feed you only for the sake of Allah; we have no intention of (receiving) either a return from you or thanks. [9] In fact, we are fearful of a day, from our Lord, that will be frowning, extremely frowning." [10] So Allah will save them from the evil of that day, and will grant them bloom and delight, [11] and will give them, in return for their patience, garden and (garments of) silk, [12] wherein they will be reclining on couches, feeling neither heat of the sun, nor intense cold, [13] and shades of gardens will be hanging low on them, and its fruits will be put entirely into their service. [14] And circulated among them will be vessels of silver, and cups that will be (as transparent as) crystals, [15] __crystals (as shining as if made) of silver, measured by those (who filled them) with due measure. [16] And they will be served with a goblet of drink blended with ginger, [17] a spring therein called Salsabil. [18] And circling around them will be serving boys, blessed with eternal youth; when you would see them, you would take them as scattered pearls. [19] And when you will look around there, you will see the Bliss, and a magnificent realm. [20] Upon them will be garments of green *sundus* (a kind of fine silk), and of *istabraq* (a kind of thick silk). And they will be adorned by bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a pure beverage to drink. [21] (It will be said to them,) "This is a reward for you, and your effort has been appreciated." [22]

Indeed we have revealed to you the Qur'ān through a gradual process. [23] So, submit patiently to your Lord's decision, and do not obey any one of them who is sinner or ungrateful. [24] And pronounce the name of Allah morning and evening. [25] And in some parts of night, prostrate before Him, and pronounce His purity for long times at night. [26] In fact these people love that which is immediate, and neglect a Heavy Day ahead of them. [27] We have created them, and have made their joints strong. And whenever We will, We would replace them with others like them, a total replacement. [28] Indeed, this is a reminder; so let anyone who so wishes, adopt a way to his Lord. [29] And you will not so wish, unless Allah so wills. Indeed Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [30] He admits whomsoever He wills to His

mercy. As for the wrongdoers, for them He has prepared a painful punishment. [31]

Commentary

Sūrah Ad-Dahr has also been called Sūrah Al-Insān (Man) and Sūrah Al-Abrār (The Righteous) [Rūḥ]. The Sūrah describes in a very effective, eloquent and elegant style the inception and end of human creation, reward and punishment of deeds, and the conditions of the Hereafter, Paradise and Hell.

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا (There has come upon man a period of time in which he was nothing worth mentioning.....76:1). The interrogative particle *hal* is used [linguistically] to introduce an interrogative sentence. Often, however, an interrogative construction is used to emphasise a self-evident truth. Such an interrogative means that whenever this question is put to anyone at anytime, the same answer is likely to come forth. There can be no other possibility. For instance, if a question is posed to anyone in the middle of day 'Is it not a day?', it is an interrogative sentence, but the answer is predictable and will emphasise its obviousness. Therefore, some scholars say that the particle *hal* is used here in the sense of *qad* 'indeed'. In both cases, the verse signifies that there has come upon man a period of time in which he was nothing worth mentioning. The word *ḥīnun* with nunation [which is the sign of 'indefiniteness'] signifies 'a long indefinite period of time; The verse mentions that a long period of time came upon man. This indicates that man essentially did exist at that time in one form or another, (but he was not worth mentioning), because time could not have come upon 'man' if he was in a state of pure non-existence [Al-'adam-ul- mahd]. Therefore, most commentators say that the 'period of time' here refers to the period when he was conceived in the mother's womb till his birth, which normally is nine months. This period covers all the stages of his creation, right from his being a sperm-drop up to his having a body and organs, and then his acquiring life and soul. During this time, he is thought existent, neither his gender is known to anyone, nor his name or his shape or size. Therefore, he is unmentionable.

The statement of the verse may also be taken in a wider sense. The inception of human creation takes place with the sperm that is produced by food. This food and its source and substance was existent in one or

other form. If the period of that time is calculated, this long indefinite period of time can stretch into thousands of years. In any case, Allah has drawn man's attention in this verse to a particular fact. If he uses his sense, he will discover his own reality. In addition, he will have no choice but to have complete faith and unshaken belief in the Allah, His Omniscience and His Omnipotence. Suppose, a person of seventy years reflects that he was unmentionable in any way about seventy-one years ago, even his grand parents had not imagined his particular existence, though they might have had a general concept of a child, then what caused his creation, what bewildering power drew together particles from different parts of the world to form a perfect human being, making him an intelligent, a hearing and seeing creature? Such a reflection will spontaneously force such a person to confirm the Persian poet who says:

ما نبودیم و تقاضا ما نبود..... لطف تو نا گفته ما می شنود

Neither we were there, nor was there any demand from us.
It is only Your mercy that listened to what we never said.

Verse [2] describes the inception of human creation thus:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ (We have created man from a mixed sperm-drop __76:2). The word *amshāj* is the plural of *mashj* or *mashīj* which means a 'mixture'. Here obviously it refers to the male and female gametes according to most commentators, but some commentators say, as cited in Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, that *amshaj* refers to the four fluids of the body [blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy] of which the sperm is composed .

Man Is Made up of Particles from Different Parts of the World

If we reflect carefully, the cardinal fluids are made up of various kinds of nutriment. If we reflect further on man's food, it contains elements of water and air from distant parts of the globe. Thus, if we were to analyse man's present body, we will discover that it is composed of elements and particles that were scattered in every nook and corner of the world. A marvellous system set by Allah has, in a wonderful way, put them together in human structure. If this sense of *amshāj* 'mixed' is taken into account here, it allays the greatest doubt of the rejecters of Resurrection. Their main objection is that when they are dead, reduced to crumbled bones and dust, how will they be raised to life again? They thought this was impossible.

The interpretation of *amshāj* as 'cardinal humours/fluids' allays their doubt once and for all. At the inception, when man was created, he was composed of particles and elements from all parts of the world. Allah did not find this difficult the first time. Why should He find its recreation difficult the second time. According to this interpretation, the addition of the word '*amshāj*' (mixed) could have a special significance of its own. And Allah knows best!

نَبْتَلِيْهِ (to put him to a test...76:2). The Arabic verb is derived from *ibtala'* which means 'to put to test'. This phrase puts forward the Wisdom underlying human creation. Allah has created man to put him to a test. This test is defined in forthcoming verses. Allah sent Prophets and celestial Books for the purpose of showing him both ways, one leading to Paradise, and the other to Hell. Man has been given a choice to adopt any one of the two ways. This led mankind into two groups, thus:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا (We have shown him the way to (let him) become either grateful or ungrateful...76:3). The first group was of those who, appreciating Allah's bounties, offered gratitude to Allah, and believed in Him, while the second group was of those who remained ungrateful to Allah's favours, disbelieved. After the description of the two groups, the next verse describes the punishment and evil consequences of the disbelievers. Allah has prepared, for the disbelievers, shackles and iron-collars and a blazing Fire. On the other hand, huge bounties are mentioned for the believers and righteous people. Out of these bounties, drinkables are mentioned first. They will have a drink from a goblet, blended with (a drink from) Camphor.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا (The righteous will have a drink from a goblet, blended with [a drink from] Camphor....76:5). Some of the commentators say that *kāfūr* (Camphor) refers to a fountain in Paradise. In order to enhance the taste and pleasure of this drink, it will be mixed with water from this spring. If the word 'camphor' is taken in its popular sense, it does not necessarily signify that the camphor of Paradise be equated with the camphor available in this world, because the latter is not palatable.

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ (that will be a spring from which Allah's slaves will drink...76:6). Grammatically, '*ainan* (spring) is a complement [*badal*] to *kāfūran* which explains *Kāfūr*. Given this construction, it becomes certain

that *Kaḥūr* is the name of a spring. However, if the word '*ainan*' is taken as an explanation to *ka*'s (goblet), the meaning would be that the goblet will contain a drink from a spring specified for Allah's slaves. In this case, it is also possible that the term 'Allah's slaves' refers to a category other than 'Abrār' (Righteous).

يُؤْتُونَ بِالْذِّكْرِ (They [are the ones who] fulfil the vows...76:7). This describes the reason why the righteous believers and Allah's slaves will receive these favours and bounties. This verse signifies that whenever they vow to do a good act, they invariably fulfil the vow. The word 'vow' literally means 'to take upon oneself an obligation which Shari'ah has not obligated on him'. Once a vow is taken, it becomes obligatory to fulfil it. Here it is stated that great rewards and favours for the inmates of Paradise would be apportioned to them because they fulfilled the vow. The verse indicates that when they are so particular about fulfilling their vows that are taken by them upon themselves, they would be even more particular about fulfilling the obligations enjoined upon them by Allah. Thus 'the fulfilment of vows' covers the entire spectrum of religious obligations. They would receive the favours of Paradise, if they completely obey Allah and rigorously apply His sacred laws. In any case, this statement emphasises the importance and obligation of fulfilment of vows.

Ruling

There are several conditions that must be met before a vow can be constituted: [1] The vow must be legitimate and permissible - not a sin. If a person swears an oath to commit a sinful act, it is necessary for him to break the oath, and pay the expiation for violating it.⁽¹⁾ [2] It must not be legislated by Allah as an obligatory duty, as for instance if a person were

- (1) It should be noted that in the original text of Ma'ārif-ul-Qur'ān, the expression is such that the vow may be confused by a layman with oath. To understand the point, it should be borne in mind that if a person makes a vow to commit a sin, like telling a lie, or drinking liquor, this vow is not recognized in Shari'ah. It is necessary for such a person to abstain from the sin, and since the vow is not recognized by the Shari'ah, no expiation (*kaffārah*) is needed. However, it is the rule about oath that has been mentioned in the text above. That is, if someone swears an oath to tell a lie, for example, he has to break the oath and offer *kaffārah*.

to vow that he will perform the prescribed prayer or *witr* prayer, the vow would be null and void, because it is already a prescribed obligation. [3] According to Imām A'ḡam Abū Ḥanīfah رَحِمَهُ اللهُ تَعَالَى, it is also a condition that the vowed act must be an act of worship in itself, and such act of worship should belong to those forms of worship which have been made obligatory in some way or the other, as for instance prayers, fasting, charity, sacrifice and so on. If the vowed act is not prescribed as a worship, such a vow will be void. For instance, if a person were to vow that he will pay a visit to a sickly patient, or follow a funeral procession, this vow will not be valid, because although these acts carry rewards as acts of worship, yet they are not acts, of worship in themselves (*Al-Ibādāt-ul- Maqsūdah*). Detailed rules and principles related to vows and oaths are available in books of jurisprudence.

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا (and they give food, despite their love for it, to the needy, and the orphan, and the captive...76:8). The other reason why the inmates of Paradise will receive these favours is given in this verse, that is, their feeding the needy, the orphans and the captives.

على حُبِّهِ (despite their love for it). This would mean that they give food to the needy while they themselves love it and desire it__ not that they eat to their fill and give the left-over food to the needy and poor. That feeding the poor and orphans is a form of worship and attracts reward is obvious. The word 'captive' refers to all prisoners, Muslim criminals, as well as infidels who are kept in prisons according to the principles of Shari'ah. It is the responsibility of the Islamic government to feed them. Anyone who feeds them is actually assisting the government and the public treasury. Therefore, feeding the prisoners, even Non-Muslims, is an act of reward. In the early days of Islam, especially, feeding the prisoners and taking care of them or protecting them was a responsibility that was shared by the general body of Muslims, as it happened with the prisoners of the Battle of Badr.

قَوَارِيرًا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ (vessels of silver...76:16). Silver vessels in this world are dense which can never be like glass, and that which is made of glass can never be silver. Thus silver and glass are two contradictory concepts in this world. However, it is a characteristic of Paradise that its glasses will be as bright as silver, and as transparent and sparkling as crystal.

Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said: "The blessings given in Paradise have their likes in this world also, except these vessels that are made of silver, but as transparent as a mirror."

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا (And they will be served with a goblet of drink blended with ginger...76:17). The word *zanjabīl* means 'ginger'. The Arabs loved that their drink should be mixed with ginger. Therefore, it is mentioned in the context of Paradise [so that they are served with drinks flavoured with ginger of paradisiacal quality and splendour]. Some scholars say that the only thing the blessings of Paradise and the blessings of this world share in common is their name, and they have nothing else in common. Therefore, the 'ginger' of this world cannot be equated with the 'ginger' of Paradise.

وَحُلُّوْا أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ (...And they will be adorned by bracelets of silver...76:21). The *asāwir* is the plural of *siwar* that refers to a 'bracelet'. It is a piece of jewellery worn around the wrist. This verse speaks of 'silver bracelets'. On another occasion [22:23], the Qurʾān speaks of *asāwira min dhahab* 'gold bracelets'. There is no discrepancy between the two verses, because sometimes the silver bracelets will be worn, and at other times the gold bracelets, or some will wear gold bracelets and others will wear silver bracelets.

However, a question arises in any case: A bracelet looks good on women, but does not suit men. Why will the men of Paradise wear bracelets? The Answer is that suitability of any piece of jewellery to men or women depends on custom. The style and appeal of jewellery differ from country to country and vary from nation to nation. In some cultures, a piece of jewellery is treated as highly inappropriate for men, and in other cultures it is regarded as highly beautiful and elegant. The Chosros [Persian kings] used to wear bracelets around their wrists, and various kinds of jewellery used to be studded on their chest and crown. This was counted as a distinctive feature of their prestige and honour. After the conquest of Persian empire, the treasures that fell into Muslims' hands contained the Persian Emperor's bracelets. Thus the various cultures and nations differ in their taste for jewellery in this very world. The flair and taste for jewellery for men in Paradise cannot be equated with their flair for it in this world.

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا ([It will be said to them,] "This is a reward for you, and your effort has been appreciated....76:22). Allah will address the inmates of Paradise once they have entered Paradise, and will announce to them that the amazing bounties are granted to them as a reward for their good deeds they had done in the world, and their deeds have been appreciated by Allah. These expressions will be made to them by way of congratulation. For the people of love, the Divine congratulatory expressions will outweigh all the other blessings of Paradise put together. The congratulatory words are a proof positive of Divine pleasure.

Having mentioned the general blessings of the inmates of Paradise, special blessings that are conferred on the Holy Prophet ﷺ are listed. Firstly, the blessing in the form of the revelation of the Qur'ān is mentioned. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is, then, directed that the opponents and obdurate non-believers will obstinately reject the message and persecute him. So, he is to submit patiently to Allah's decision, and he should not obey any sinner or ungrateful person. Secondly, he is commanded to pronounce the name of Allah, and worship Him day and night. Further, he should prostrate before Him, during the night, and pronounce His purity for long times at night. This preoccupation will serve as a remedy for the non-believers' persecution. Towards the conclusion of the passage, the verse shows the reason for the persistence of the obdurate infidels. These ignoramus are intoxicated with the fleeting pleasures of this world, and have neglected the Hereafter, whereas if they had pondered in their own being or existence, they would have recognised and understood their Creator and Maker.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَلَهُمْ تَبْدِيلًا (We have created them and have made their joints strong. And whenever We will, We would replace them with others like them, a total replacement....76:28)

Miracles of Nature Respecting Human Joints

This verse alludes to the fact that even though man's limbs and organs are perpetually in motion, and the wear and tear on them is phenomenal, they continue to function from birth to death. When machines made of iron or steel wear out and require regular servicing to

remain functioning for even a short period, man's body, made of soft tissues and muscles, functions for decades and scores of years without maintenance. Let us take the joints of the fingers [or other joints of the human body]. They are moved vigorously in different ways in an uncountable number of times. Heavy pressure and force is applied to them for seventy to eighty years [on an average], yet the finger-joints [and other joints] remain intact. It is certainly only Allah Who makes this possible. 'Glorious is Allah, the Best of Creators!'

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ad-Dahr
Ends here